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*A research intervention and information center for
improving the health of New England employees*

Request for Applications – Research Pilot Projects

August 28, 2017

A. Background/Purpose

The Center for the Promotion of Health in the New England Workplace (CPH-NEW) (www.uml.edu/cphnew) has been authorized by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) to support a Pilot Projects grant program in the New England region. This program will support up to two research projects in the coming year, with a budget of up to \$13,000 (direct costs only).

B. Nature and Scope of Projects

The Pilot Project program is intended to support projects in any area of workplace health or safety related to the CPH-NEW mission under the NIOSH *Total Worker Health*[®] (TWH) program (<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/TWH/>):

Total Worker Health[®] is defined as policies, programs, and practices that integrate protection from work-related safety and health hazards with promotion of injury and illness prevention efforts to advance worker well-being.

Pilot projects should thus address the intersection of work-related and non-work-related predictors of poor health outcomes, and/or appropriate intervention responses. The scope may range from shop-floor work tasks to organizational policies, culture, and programs. Inter-disciplinary proposals are encouraged.

Examples of eligible projects include (but are not limited to):

- Research with newly defined or underserved at-risk working populations
- Pilot studies to characterize health risk prevalence and associations
- Feasibility studies to develop and test new intervention approaches or applications in workplace or community settings
- Methods development, including pilot laboratory or biomarker development or application
- Effectiveness of Research-to-Practice (R2P) translation of prior research findings

Descriptions of prior awards can be found at <https://www.uml.edu/Research/CPH-NEW/Research/pilot-grant-program/>. Prospective applicants are also encouraged to listen to the recorded webinar, "[Winning Strategies for CPH-NEW Pilot Grants](#)" and/or view the accompanying slide set.

C. Eligibility

New England investigators eligible for pilot project support include: 1) Graduate students at accredited academic institutions; 2) Post-doctoral trainees, including physicians and nurses and those in medical residency programs; 3) Faculty members, visiting scholars, and research staff at accredited academic institutions; and 4) Individuals from community non-academic individuals and institutions who have a demonstrated interest and research capability in relevant field(s).

Applications are encouraged from graduate students for thesis/dissertation material, pilot work or preliminary data that could lead to thesis/dissertation research; junior faculty members; and any investigator proposing new work which has not been funded to date, especially if it might lead to a future, larger grant application (K01, R01, etc.). In keeping with the Research-to Practice emphasis of the TWH program, we encourage projects such as translational science and surveillance research that actively engage external partners such as employers, unions, community groups, public health agencies, insurers, etc.

E. Application

Deadlines: Letter of Intent **September 15, 2017**
Application **October 10, 2017**

Award Period: **November 1, 2017, to August 31, 2018**

It must be possible to complete the project within one year or less of the award date.

The project start date will be as soon as possible after the application is reviewed. No-cost extensions may be permitted, conditional upon NIOSH approval. All awards and extensions are contingent upon NIOSH funding.

a. Letter of Intent

A pre-proposal letter of intent must be submitted electronically to cphnew@uml.edu. The letter should provide a descriptive title; a short abstract (maximum 250 words) which clearly identifies how the proposed project is responsive to TWH goals; the estimated total project cost; and the name, phone number, e-mail address, and mailing address of the corresponding investigator.

If the investigator is a student, the letter should identify his or her advisor or sponsor and include a statement by that individual that s/he has read and approves of the proposal and will collaborate with the student to ensure the completion and quality of the work.

If the investigator is from a non-academic setting, the letter should indicate whether the UMass Lowell IRB will need to review and approve any research activity that involves human subjects (see section G below).

The letters of intent will be used to identify projects responsive to the TWH mission and to select reviewers with appropriate expertise to review the applications.

b. Proposal Format

The proposal should be a maximum of 5 pages (including references) in an abbreviated NIH-type R-21 format (*), including the following sections:

- 1. Cover Page with Abstract:** Project title; Investigators' names and institutions; and abstract of the project summarizing the goals, methods, and expected deliverables.
- 2. Specific Aims:** The concrete goals to be accomplished by the project. These should be stated so that it is clear how to determine when the aim has been accomplished (e.g. "to estimate the frequency of sleep problems and their association with shift work").
- 3. Background and rationale:** Explain the significance for worker health and how the work is innovative – e.g., how it addresses the intersection of work related and non-work related predictors of poor health outcomes, and/or appropriate intervention responses.
- 4. Research strategy:** A summary description of the research project methods: experimental design, subjects, data collection and analysis, timeline.
- 5. Bibliography:** References cited to justify the need, research methods, etc.
- 6. Facilities:** A description of the facilities and equipment, if any, that will be used in the conduct of the research.

The following must also be included but do not count toward the page limit:

- 7. Detailed line-item budget with accompanying budget justification**
- 8. Biographical Sketch** (4-page NIH format*) for the Principal Investigator and for each collaborator (up to 3 biosketches maximum in addition to the PI).

* *NIH forms and instructions for budget and biographical sketches are available on-line at: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>*

D. Budget

Allowable costs: Funds may be used to support research-related expenses such as payment of participants, printing/copying of research materials (e.g., questionnaires, consent forms), travel for data collection, specialized equipment (e.g., micro-cassette recorder/transcriber), or paying research assistants with specialized skills necessary for the proposed project (e.g., fluency in another language).

Funds may *not* be used for providing services to customers, conference travel, purchase of routine office equipment (e.g., computers), institutional indirect costs, or student tuition or fees.

Funds may be used for the investigator's salary only if the investigator is a student (in which case RA tuition costs might also be justifiable) or if s/he would otherwise be unable to carry out the proposed research. In this instance, the budget justification must include a clear statement of the investigator's employment/salary situation, in order to justify the request.

Indirect costs are excluded from these Pilot Project awards.

F. Proposal Review and Award Criteria

Each proposal will be reviewed by a minimum of two researchers who are CPH-NEW investigators, External Advisory Committee members, Center Affiliates, or other scientists who have expertise in the relevant field(s) for each application. Standard procedures will be followed to avoid any conflict of interest.

Funding will be awarded based on:

- Importance of the research question and potential for improvements in worker health from the proposed project (30%)
- Extent to which the project is novel or innovative, especially proposals that examine new topics or test new methods and/or theories (15%)
- Scientific merit of the research plan, including sound methods and plans for interpreting the results (30%)
- Relevance to the mission of CPH-NEW and the NIOSH TWH program (25%)

The successful investigator must demonstrate:

- The appropriate expertise to undertake the project
- Access to appropriate resources and facilities
- A realistic and appropriate budget and timeline to achieve the aims
- Consistency with core principles of the NIOSH TWH program; reflecting an integrated approach to improving employee safety, health and wellbeing
- Feasibility to accomplish the project within the award period
- Investigator and project located in the New England region

Additional credit will be given to projects with any of these features:

- Potential to benefit underserved worker populations or workers at high risk
- Involvement of employees and /or incorporation of worker input in the project
- Potential to position the researcher for successful application of major grant support for more comprehensive research in the same topic area
- Projects by researchers proposing to conduct TWH research for the first time in their career, or early in their career
- New ideas, methods, translational processes, or work sectors not yet studied within CPH-NEW

G. Human Subjects and Laboratory Animals

Federal regulations require appropriate precautions if human or animal subjects are to be used in the conduct of research. For data collected from people, the basic criterion for review is that personally identified information will be obtained beyond that available from observation of public behavior. The research protocol must be approved by the human subjects and/or animal care committee of the investigator's home institution and submitted to CPH-NEW for verification by the UMass Lowell Institutional Review Board (IRB) and/or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

In situations where the investigator's institution does not have a federally approved Human Subjects or Animal Care Committee, an application must be submitted to the UMass Lowell committee to review and approve the research activity. Since the Pilot Projects are federally funded, all collaborating institutions that are engaged in research must operate under a valid federal-wide assurance. (Please refer to <http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov>). The prospective applicant who needs to use this process at UMass Lowell must state that need in the Letter of Intent and should discuss the situation with Dr. Laura Punnett, Center Co-Director, as far in advance as possible of submitting the pilot project application.

The use of vertebrate animals in the conduct of this research will comply with applicable portions of the Animal Welfare Act (P.L. 89-544 as amended) and will follow guidelines prescribed in the DHHS Publication No 72-73 (NIH), "Guide to the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals," 1985 edition.

All proposals along with their Human Subjects or Laboratory Animal Approval (if indicated) will be kept on file at UMass. Lowell and will be provided to NIOSH if so requested.

Awardees will not receive any funds until the human subjects review and/or animal use review have been completed. This process may take 3 weeks or more from the time of submission to the review panel.

H. Accounting, Reporting, and Publications Requirements

Each applicant for these pilot project research funds must agree to comply with OMB Circular A-21 for accounting and OMB Circular A-133 pertaining to audit of records. Please refer to www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/. For each pilot project funded, a subcontract agreement will be issued as a Cost Incurred award, using the "reimbursement model" (i.e., the host organization invoices UMass. Lowell for reimbursement of expenses after the fact).

Each awardee must obtain prior permission through the CPH-NEW Administrator, Ms. Sandy Sun (Sandy_Sun@uml.edu), regarding any change in amount or timing of expenditures.

If any income is generated from this research activity, the investigator will inform the CPH-NEW Administrator. All appropriate Public Health Service Grant Policies regarding Program Income will apply.

Each investigator funded under this program will be required to provide an accounting of the use of the funds within 6 weeks after the close of the grant period.

Each investigator will prepare a brief progress report approximately mid-way through the project, and a written final report approximately one month after the end of the funded grant project period. Templates will be provided by CPH-NEW.

After the project, the investigator will be asked to contribute a "CPH-News and Views" piece summarizing their work for an educated lay audience, to be posted on the Center website. These are topic briefs of 500-800 words, written for a broad audience of interested professionals and researchers. Past issues are posted on the CPH-News and Views web page: <https://www.uml.edu/Research/CPH-NEW/News/emerging-topics/>.

All material published as a result of this research (including presentation slides) must contain the following acknowledgement:

"This investigation was made possible by Grant No. U19-OH008857 from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the NIOSH."

Reprints of all articles, conference abstracts, and other publications resulting from this award should be forwarded to the CPH-NEW Center Administrator at cphnew@uml.edu.